



Inside CFSA

For Our Child-Serving Community

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Licensing Standards Equal Safer Facilities for Children

What happens to 11 children with disabilities when the group home caring for them cannot be licensed? Since legislation requiring licensing of District-based group homes and Independent Living Programs serving children and youth went into effect in January 2003, CFSA's first denial of a license also proved to be one of the toughest in terms of the child residents. This is a story of how CFSA's growing capability to achieve safety, permanence, and well being for children faced a difficult test—and passed.



In March, CFSA notified the facility of the intent to move all 11 children by the end of the month. Clinical Practice then had to find new, qualified, licensed placements and arrange to safely move all 11 children.

While this was far from an easy task, it was in the best interest of the children. Clinical Practice collaborated with Program Operations to manage this delicate and complicated initiative. In the process of identifying new placements, Registered Nurses Cheryl Durden and Pamela Hodge of CFSA Clinical Practice were tasked with ensuring that special medical equipment went with the children, as needed, and that providers were briefed and trained about the children's history and needs.

Durden and Hodge assessed and monitored the safety and well being of the medically fragile children, ages 9 to 19, in a group home specializing in their care. Through routine visits, both scheduled and unscheduled, the nurses used clinical procedures to assess each child, which included:

- checking the number, frequency, and dosage of medications;
- evaluating occupational and speech therapy needs;
- reviewing medical and dental examination and immunization records;
- observing cleanliness, food preparation, and dietary regimens;
- assessing interactions between staff and children; and
- overseeing staff capability to provide proper care for the children.

In the past, the District's child protective program had no capability to improve placements for medically-fragile children. CFSA Clinical Practice now makes these improvements possible. Among other staff, Clinical Practice now has two clinical psychologists and a pediatrician (see related story). CFSA plans to hire two additional RNs.

Pediatrician Joins CFSA



Cheryl Ruth Williams, MD, joined CFSA May 7, as administrator for Clinical Support & Health Services in Clinical Practice. She has over 17 years of experience in public health services to high-risk children, adolescents, and families in the District.

For a number of years, Dr. Williams served as center chief for the DC Community and School Health Program and as medical officer for Pediatrics at D.C. General Hospital. She was also a pediatric specialist for child protection at the Children's National Medical Center, where she examined, diagnosed, and treated child and teen victims of physical and sexual abuse.

This is the first time CFSA has had a medical doctor on staff specifically to serve children. Dr. Williams will work to build a high-quality, child-centered health care delivery system for CFSA clients. She will also advise social workers about medical aspects of client cases.

New Program Prepares Youth for Independence

CFSA Office of Youth Development has initiated a special project, (6 month planning grant funded by Freddie Mac), to identify and better prepare youth scheduled to age out of foster care. The project seeks to ensure that each youth has a feasible, individualized plan for independence that includes new "after-care" support. In conjunction with the Healthy Families/ Thriving Community Collaboratives, CFSA will conduct community-based emancipation conferences designed to hear needs and concerns from the foster youth themselves and to develop sound plans for their future.

"This presents a wonderful opportunity to partner with the community to ensure neighborhood-based support and services for youth," stated Elaine Overton, deputy director, Youth Development. "We anticipate that youth will experience greater success as productive adults with help from their communities."

Initial efforts will focus on youth scheduled to age out as well as those who became independent since February 2003. For more information, contact Quinn Alston, (202) 497-4360. ■

CFSA Public Information faxes this newsletter monthly to providers and other partners. To provide comments or to update your fax number, call (202) 442-6015. Editor: Derek Stewart ■